



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

What is an individual? The view from Christianity

Citation for published version:

Bialecki, J & Daswani, G 2015, 'What is an individual? The view from Christianity', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 271-294. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau5.1.013>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.14318/hau5.1.013](https://doi.org/10.14318/hau5.1.013)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Jon Bialecki and Girish Daswani

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.





SPECIAL SECTION INTRODUCTION

What is an individual?

The view from Christianity

Jon BIALECKI, *University of Edinburgh*
Girish DASWANI, *University of Toronto*

The introduction to this special section of *Hau* focuses on the tensions between individualism and dividualism as modes of personhood; while this essay approaches this foundational anthropological question through recent debates in the anthropology of Christianity, its larger concern is to reopen the question of in/dividualism in order to see whether we can imagine different relations between these two forms of being. As part of this discussion, this introductory essay rehearses the history of individualism and dividualism as concepts, reviews the current controversy over partible Christian personhood in Melanesia, and attends to recent debates about the relation between religion, the nation, and the state in Papua New Guinea that have followed from defacement of the Papuan Parliament Building. Synthesizing this material, we argue for a shift in framing of the question of in/dividualism. Rather than viewing dividualism and individualism as merely heuristics, or as vying but extant modes of organizing the subject, we suggest that in/dividualisms are best thought of as actualizations of a unitary underlying generative problematic. This is a problematic not merely for the anthropologist but for the anthropologist's interlocutors as well; and as this problematic is worked through in various locales, we should expect not merely a wide variety of dividual and individual crystallizations of the person but also we should anticipate particular ethnographic milieus expressing complex emergent relations between the various extant dividualisms and individualisms.

Keywords: Individualism, dividualism, Christianity, personhood, relationality

The essays contained in this special section have two points of origin. As their ultimate point of departure, these essays all ask questions regarding the constitution and plasticity of the subjects that have been a driving anthropological concern since Marcel Mauss (1985) first asked what an anthropologically-informed genealogy of the person would look like. The essays address the constellation of selves, roles,

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons



| © Jon Bialecki and Girish Daswani.

ISSN 2049-1115 (Online). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14318/hau5.1.013>

responsibilities, and duties that the problem of the in/dividual raises through different social and cultural contexts; and they do so not merely in places that have adopted or been exposed to Christian notions of the self but in any place where the force or pace of modernity has threatened to thin the constitutive web of social relations and thereby give rise to new constructions of the self, or where novel constructions of the persons struggle to hold sway. It is true that all these contributions collectively ask, in one way or another, the question “does the Christian in/dividual matter, and why (not)?” However, the answers that they give suggest that this is a question that is of importance not just to those studying self-identified “Christian” populations but also potentially to all scholars who work on the full variety of ways in which human beings comprehend and create themselves as self-conscious agents in the world. This special section therefore also attempts to retrieve some of the importance and danger of the individual and the dividual as relevant frameworks for anthropological thinking. The individual/dividual nexus provides a good analogy for the different—but connected—ways that people have been described as related or relatable, and potentially provides a cultural and ethical foundation for how people think about and take on positions of connection and separation. But thinking of individualism and dividualism as dynamics that mutually implicate each other, rather than as long-established anthropological typologies, is also an opportunity to rediscover what was compelling and intellectually risky about this question when it were first introduced to the discipline; and it may even serve as an opportunity to imagine how we might take the opposition between the individual and the dividual and sublate it.

That is the ultimate point of departure; the proximate point of departure for this discussion, however, are the debates that centered on Mark Mosko’s (2010) critique of Joel Robbins and other ethnographers of Melanesian Christianity in his 2008 Curl Prize-winning paper, *Partible penitents: Dividual personhood and Christian practice in Melanesia and the West*. In that paper, Mosko argues that ethnographic depictions of Christianity in Melanesia misapprehends what he takes to be a vital feature of Christianity: that the Christian Person was fundamentally dividual, in the sense of the term as used by Marilyn Strathern. As Robbins argues, though, both in his response to Mosko (Robbins 2010) and throughout his *oeuvre*, Mosko and arguments similar to Mosko’s ignores a sense common to many Melanesians that the adoption of Christianity does mark a epochal change in their history. Further, Robbins insists that Mosko’s claim also does not grasp that an important part of that change has been a Melanesian grappling with individualism, a mode of personhood that had been heretofore hypotrophied in Melanesia, and that is to many Melanesian minds closely associated with their new religion.

This discussion, and other recent anthropological claims about Christian individualism, dividualism, or partiability (see, e.g., Bialecki 2011, 2015; Coleman 2004, 2011; Chua 2012; Daswani 2011, 2015; Errington and Gewertz 2010; Handman 2015a; Keane 2007; Robbins 2002, 2007; Vilaça 2011; Werbner 2011) without doubt grounds this set of essays. But it would be a mistake to only attend to the proximate point of origin of this discussion. While all these essays thread themselves through relatively recent discussions in the anthropology of Christianity, this special section tries to do this work while attending to the varied and variable sense of dividualism (LiPuma 1998). The people we study and work with, Christian or not, may not be tied to one model of subjectivity. They might very well lean toward one mode of



being a person more than another while also acknowledging the multiple modes available to them, which they embrace at different moments, or when it becomes appropriate to do so—allowing themselves to alternate between inner and outer forms of religious practice. Seen from this perspective a person potentially includes individual and dividual aspects of the self that also become entwined through the decisions that he or she makes about when to take on different roles or masks and within a range of possible moral and social frameworks. As the discussion in this special section shows, questions of personhood are not quantum grids constituting fixed and mutually irreconcilable positions; nor are they entirely plastic flows, capable of taking any form whatsoever. They are rather responses to specific problematics and thus their variability both between, and within, various collectivities is not a renunciation of the idea of some mode of immanent structuration of the person but evidence for that claim. In short, while it is about a particular contestation in the fast-growing but still somewhat specialized anthropology of Christianity, this special section also has relevance for those of us who strive to understand the combined task that people have of considering and cultivating an awareness of self (what am I?) and the work that they perform in enacting social roles and responsibilities toward themselves and others (when am I?).

Dividualism's history

It is difficult to get to the genetic aspects that underlay in/dividualism because, as contrasting typologies, individualism and dividualism summon each other up as fully formed entities: as mutually constituting categories, there is no individual, except insofar as there is a dividual, and the reverse is true as well. Even if we agree that these concepts still serve as ideal types that have significance as each other's antipodes, we still have to account for how this opposition has come about. How has in/dividualism been used? How do we tell where "dividuals" end and "individuals" begin and vice versa?

The assumption that we can render these terms mutually exclusive is at the core of the problematic that makes the in/dividual person thinkable. Therefore, before we proceed to unravel the thread of possibilities that a revisitation of the debate on Christian personhood holds, we would like to rehearse some of the foundational positions concerning personhood that many anthropologists are committed to. This is necessary because, as is well known, discussions regarding in/dividuality are not limited to the anthropology of Christianity. To think about in/dividualism, Christian or otherwise, we have to think of the history of both the concept of the dividual and of the individual in anthropology.

One of the chief planks of this history, our anthropological received wisdom on the topic, has been that individuality and dividuality take on different degrees of importance that are also culturally specific. McKim Marriott (1976) and Marilyn Strathern (1988) are both important ethnographic thinkers who have helped us question the Western assumptions of the bounded, singular, individual self, as the main form of imagining the person, suggesting instead different constellations of personhood and interbeing for different milieus. Methodologically, they suggest that we temporarily suspend Western inflected dichotomies and allow our analyses

to arise from within the cultural milieus of our interlocutors, that is, from the ideas they have of themselves and their social lives. In Melanesia, for example, persons as dividuals are “frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produce them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm” (Strathern 1988: 13). In her work Strathern importantly views the body as a location of relations, which can be separated into gendered parts and conceptualized as an agent, a cause, or a relationship. Melanesian persons are not simply individuals made by relations of domination and hierarchy. Instead they are also composite beings that are coconstructed through the gifts and the detachable parts of others. Strathern’s idea of the “dividual” has not only found resonance in other parts of Melanesia but has become a “diasporic” concept, transported and transposed to other parts of the world; it has become, according to Marshall Sahlins, “a widely distributed icon of the pre-modern subject” (Sahlins 2011: 13). It is through this intellectual maneuver that a specificity of locale and population found in the original conceptions of dividualism has slipped toward an in/dividualism binary.

Roy Wagner, another major contributor to discussions on personhood, introduces the term “fractal person” through his own Austronesian perspective from New Ireland. In rethinking the anthropological analyses of great men and big men systems he proposes that the “fractal person is never a unit standing in relation to an aggregate, or an aggregate standing in relation to a unit, but always an entity with relationship integrally implied” (Wagner 1991: 163). According to Wagner the fractal person is neither singular nor plural since fractality “relates to, converts to and reproduces the whole” and this is “something as different from a sum as it is from an individual part” (1991: 166). The fractal person like the dividual self is always in the making, not as fragments of a unitary identity but as parts of ongoing relations between them (see also Strathern 2009: 149–51).

Theoretical concepts such as dividuality and fractality are important heuristic devices in our anthropological toolkit that allow us to turn our attention away from bounded and static ways of thinking about personhood or the hierarchical relation between society and the individual and toward problematizing how we construct the person as an object of study. It should be remembered, though, that it was originally intended solely as a heuristic and not as a schematic representation that completely exhausts actual modes of life. As Ryan Schram (this issue) adroitly reminds us, the concept of the “dividual” was never meant to be “a theory of particular cultural forms” but “always a thought experiment about what social theory would be if it started from an alternative understanding of persons.”

From “inseparable trinity” to “possessive individualism”

The attraction of dividualism and its penumbra concepts, as well as the temptation to see them as something more along the lines of a representation of a mode of social life rather than of a heuristic, both spring from the fact that they serve as powerful contrasts to regnant Euro-American visions of the constitution of the self. Representations of the unitary self or the individual continue to coexist and even dominate our social, political, and economic milieus during late liberalism. This ideologically laden nature of individualism does not mean that it does not have a

certain power to order both ethnographic data and experience; just as we saw in the use of dividualism as a heuristic, something about individualism as a concept also hits on something, even if it doesn't exhaust the phenomena it describes, nor can it serve as the "truth" from the actual structures of personhood and exchange. Rather than merely negate a Western dualism or ignore the importance of "the individual," we ought to acknowledge when and where this concept appears or presents itself as important—not merely in the lives of our interlocutors but also as a story that we come to tell ourselves; at the same time, the fictive nature of the individualism, and the power that comes from that fiction, should not be forgotten either.

In his book *The long revolution* ([1961] 2011), Raymond Williams provides a historical genealogy of the word "individual." He explains how "individual" meant "inseparable" in medieval thought, in direct reference to the theological argument about the nature of the Christian Holy Trinity ([1961] 2011: 96).

The effort was to explain how a being could be thought of existing in his own nature yet existing by this nature as part of an indivisible whole. . . . The crucial history of the modern description is a change in emphasis which enabled us to think of "the individual" as a kind of absolute, without immediate reference, by the very structure of the term, to the group of which he is a member . . . since that time [late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century], we have learnt to think of "the individual in his own right," where previously to describe an individual was to give an example of the group of which he was a member. (Williams [1961] 2011: 96–97)

Williams explains that the history of the idea of the soul (especially during the Reformation) is an important trajectory through which "the individual" took on a more personal character and was depicted as possessing a direct relationship with God. With the beginnings of capitalism and increased mobility came the idea that "the individual" was "a source of economic activity" and "by his free enterprise" (Williams [1961] 2011: 98). The individual has since become the natural starting point of questions and debates in economics, psychology and philosophy. What Crawford Macpherson (1962) later referred to as "possessive individualism" has become a modern condition that many of us take for granted and even aspire to, in which the individual is a concept nestled within a systematically empowered discourse of the market economy and political liberalism.

An anthropological analysis, however, quickly brings us back to the importance of the self as socially constructed and the continuing role of gift exchange and reciprocity where the logic of kinship and personhood intersect. Personhood, like kinship, is "a logic of relations" that commonly consists of two different kinds of relational criteria: affinity and consanguinity (Hamberger 2013: 306). These relational criteria help organize societies and provide the structures of relatedness that help articulate learned systems of feeling and acting. For example, in a society that places more emphasis on consanguinity, personhood is more often than not socially overdetermined. In other words consanguinity structurally allows for fewer possibilities for individual self-expression, creating a hierarchical order that provides temporal continuity and socially prescribed roles within a community. Such a self, integrated in conformity with others, is compelled to specific forms of personhood. However

even as there are statuses prescribed to individuals as a result of their position within a structure, there is also diversity of characters or of particular existences. In a relational model of affinity, kinship is constructed through the forging of alliances or through horizontal ties of exchange and acts of caring and sharing. In this model it is the capabilities of individual others to act on the person and to help form the person and not simply the socially expected attributes of persons that produces personhood. Magnus Course (2011) in his work on the Mapuche of Chile describes a model of relatedness that prioritizes affinity even as ideas of consanguinity or descent are simultaneously held. If indigenous conceptions of (non-Western) personhood are often seen to emphasize individuality over dividuality, for the Mapuche, “the notion of an autonomous individual who enters social relations through his or her own volition is just as applicable as it is anywhere in the Western world” (Course 2011: 111). According to Course (2011) the Mapuche are very much “Hobbesian” and the focus on individuality is not a result of colonialism or Christianity but a continuity of an indigenous philosophy. While this is true for some of the societies anthropologists work with, where the “individual” as an idea is rooted in traditional thinking, we also have to consider that in many parts of the world Christianity has played an important role in spreading notions of the self that focus on the “individual” or a particular process of individuation.

Roger Bastide (1973), in his essay “Le principe d’individuation (contribution à une philosophie africaine),” makes a rather important observation: that the principle of individuation is a philosophical problem brought to Melanesian or African societies through Christianity. And while this problem mutates and transforms in interaction with traditional societies, the solution that Christian scholastics have given to this philosophical problem are twofold: (1) individuation by matter, and (2) individuation by form. The first states that the Christian teaches the convert to discover her identity as marked by the borders of her body, that subsequently isolates her from other bodies. The second is explained through the Platonic solution, which bases human individuation on the divine thought that transcends the convert. In other words, this Christian philosophical problem of individuation, as adopted by the converted in Africa, shifts along two ends of a spectrum that consists of materiality (matter) on the one end and shape (form) on the other. Bastide (1973) goes on to explain that while different possible events come to define us that each event exists in some way as a universal that can apply to a multiplicity of individuals, in a multiplicity of forms. For many anthropologists studying Christianity, especially in its Protestant and evangelical forms, that universal key value that individuates a subject while also making her part of an order that surpasses her is “the individual.”

The “philosophical” problem that Bastide identifies has social consequences. In the last decade the anthropology of Christianity has developed an understanding of Christianity as a cultural phenomenon that provides analytical importance to the idea of the “individual” in articulating Christian personhood (Robbins 2004; Keane 2007). Joel Robbins (2004) has described how charismatic Christians Urapmins in Papua New Guinea struggle to become individuals-in-Christ. In this model of conversion the Christian is described as the sole unit of salvation. However the Urapmin are also troubled by this model of individualism since it does not emphasize certain relationships of sharing, caring, and support between



people—attributes important to their traditional, “relationist” setting. Their attempt to become Christian individuals is a work-in-progress since a relationist conception of social life makes it difficult for the Urapmin to fully embrace Christian individualism and its emphasis on the heart. In short, the problem for Robbins’ informants is not that they are individuals but that they are not individual enough. Webb Keane (2007) has similarly brought us closer to understanding how a particular moral framework of modernity places more attention on the individual as the site for struggles over agency. Keane views the Protestant individual as the outcome of a particular semiotic ideology, a set of interactive and public practices that place more importance on the inner authenticity of speech-acts (as “sincere”) that subsequently define the limits of “agency.” It is when people are not properly aligned with the appropriate material conditions and actions associated with freedom that the authenticity of agency is questioned and the “fetish” reappears to trouble the present. Even as Robbins and Keane propose that Protestant Christianity allow for the increased importance of inner sincerity and individualism, their ethnographic subjects are struggling to properly align themselves, these ideas, and their associated practices, with traditional life rituals, ceremonial exchanges, and cultural interactions. As others have also argued, an assumed importance of a Christian discourse of “individualism” can be misleading or perhaps insufficient (Bialecki 2011; Coleman 2004, 2006; Daswani 2011, 2015; Handman 2015a; Vilaça 2011). Their work points simultaneously to the heightened importance but ultimate impossibility of a true and unmediated Protestant Christian individuality.

The Mosko-Robbins debate

One of the most determined arguments questioning an identity between Protestantism and Individualism, both outside the West but inside it as well, was put forth by Mark Mosko, instigating what has been called in some circles the “Mosko-Robbins debate.” As an event, the Mosko-Robbins debate allows for the crystallization of multiplicities inherent to Christian life and for the object of Christianity to reemerge as a topic central to discussions in anthropology. This debate raises central questions that are primarily concerned not with whether “individuals” or “dividuals” actually exist in a society, but with the nature of relations between them. The debate, at least in its current form, was commenced by Mark Mosko in his 2008 Curl Prize-winning essay, “Partible penitents: Dividual personhood and Christian practice in Melanesia and the West” (2010). The target of this essay was a new genre of Melanesia ethnography centered on the effects that Christianity engendered. These accounts of Melanesian Christianity claimed that two reported features were associated, and that this association was not mere chance, but motivated. The first of the two features was the social disruption that often accompanied the adoption of Christianity as a religion, an occurrence that has become a part of the recent historical narrative told by a striking large percent of both Melanesians and Melanesianists. The second feature was a shift in the anthropological literature from a prior understanding of the person as relational, to a current understanding where the person is imagined, at least ideally, as an individual, a particular agent characterized by both control over alienable objects and by a moral responsibility for

the state of particular inalienable aspects of the self. Mosko identified this recurrent thematic in the writings of a set of well-received and comparatively recent ethnographers of Melanesian Religion: he specifically names “Barker on Maisin; Errington and Gewertz on Karavar Islanders; Knauff on Gebusi; and Robbins on Urapmin” as exemplary (Mosko 2010: 217). The problem for Mosko was not the linkage between shifts in personhood and religious change but rather the claim that there had been a shift in personhood in the first place. In Mosko’s eyes these ethnographic works were similar in that they all mistook a dividual exchange of material aspects of a partible self as something else instead; to Mosko’s eyes, they were misrecognized as almost commodity-like exchange of alienated objects, albeit objects of various degrees of concreteness.

Mosko’s argument was based on what he claimed was a refurbishing of the “New Melanesian Ethnography,” a vision of a relationally organized and fractal Melanesian person, which has a chain of custody going back to Roy Wagner and Marilyn Strathern. This new iteration of the NME, Mosko stated, was different though, in that in taking up the question of changes in ritual practice and adoption of world religion, it showed a capacity to think through diachronic transformations in the particular modes through which dividual personhood was realized. Further, this move answered criticism that previous instantiations of the NME were forms of Melanesian essentialism; this claim was invalid here, Mosko argued, because he was suggesting that there were aspects of Christianity, that juggernaut of Western cultural Imperialism, that were also assimilable to a Melanesian logic. Indeed, Christianity was appealing to Melanesians because it was suffused with a dividual logic that was recognizable to Papuan subjects—in some ways Christianity was as relational and partible as the Melanesians supposedly were. Thereby essentialism was denied, even as the claim regarding dividuality was expanded.

Mosko’s essay, published in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, appeared alongside response pieces by the authors whose ethnographies had been set up as “bad objects.” Many authors argued that Mosko had misread both their arguments and the underlying descriptive ethnographic material as well; in situations such as this, debates over who has the ability to interpret, and in what manner, are inevitable, and attempting to police them here would just run the risk of our exponentially increasing the number of contestable hermeneutic exercises. It is the conceptual challenges, though, that are likely to capture the attention of those with an interest in ethnographic theory. And of those, the challenge that did the most to both build up and make clear the stakes of the argument was put forward in a response written by Joel Robbins (2010). He argued that Mosko had imported a language alien to that used by most Christians, and he had done so because his claim to having taken up the issue of diachronic change was hollow. For Robbins, a claim that a postconversion logic of the person was susceptible to being understood as a transmutation—but not a replacement—of a pre-Christian logics was simply to engage in “continuity thinking,” Robbins’ name for a tendency to see later religious forms as just the prior forms with a new coat of paint (Robbins 2007). Melanesian subjects, Robbins stated, saw Christianity not as a variation of old practices but rather as something new, and ethnographers and anthropological theorists did their interlocutors in the field a disservice when they did not take claims of this sort seriously. Robbins also argued that in seeing Christianity as dividual, Mosko had

denatured the cultural specificity that was supposed to be one of the distinctives of the NME; as Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz (2010) argued, in Mosko all exchange was reduced to dividual exchange. Rather than indicating a particularly Melanesian account of sociality, Robbins argued that this tendency had recast the NME. It was no longer a virtual contrasting ethnographic imaginary extracted from Melanesian practices, which was its original impetus (Strathern 1988); instead it became a generic mode of thought, just another crypto-universality social sciences argument about human organization in general, with all the ethnographic salt, the specificity and contingency, leached away.

Chainsaws and masks

What to make of these claims? Both are appealing, and yet both have aspects that could be fairly seen as unsettling as well. Distilled to its rhetorical extremes, we are between the Scylla of a universal dividualist logic and a stultifying denial of any capacity for a fundamental change in personhood that goes beyond reshuffling and renaming, and Charybdis of a runaway Western mental imperialism that denies both the continuation of a distinctive mode of Melanesian personhood and of the existence of minor traditions in Christianity that would undo the self-possessed liberal subject that seems to increasingly mark global imaginaries.

The framing just presented is a bit of intellectual violence, but it is important to understand that in venues outside of academic anthropology, similar issues are thought through with greater levels of animosity and intellectual violence, violence that threatens to go beyond the merely metaphoric. A case in point: as of the time of this writing (early 2014), the Papuan Parliamentary building in the capital of Port Moresby is still marred by what some describe as an attack. To understand the significance of this fact it helps to know about the context of symbolic and political contestation that led to this attack. And knowing about this context also involves knowing about the damaged building itself. Designed by Australian architect Cecil Hogan, the Papua New Guinea parliamentary building quotes, in shape and hue if not in material, the *haus tambaran* associated with Sepik region, a locale that, while no means representative of Papua New Guinea as a whole, has strong nationalist resonance. Other architectural features were intended to recall both Highlands Men's Houses as well as structures from the Chimbu region. In consort, this is meant to at least harken to if not all the peoples of New Guinea, at least the major geographic regions, "the highlands and the lowlands, the coast and the interior." (Rosi 1991: 297). A series of murals and decorative facades continue this theme.

As a part of this nation-building aesthetic endeavor, the structure had a series of woodcarvings made to resemble masks placed in a lintel immediately above the main doorway. These ancestral masks are a stylistic feature of certain Sepik *haus tambarans* but, in this context, they represent the nineteen provinces of the nation. Although individual motifs mark a regional or tribal identity, when incorporated into the overall iconographic program they are appropriated as symbols of a newly created (invented) national heritage enriched, according to official rhetoric, by its diversity (Rosi 1991: 300).

The interior of the building is also an exercise in nation building. If one were to enter the building and walk around its “cathedral” like space, one would come across “the most dramatic embellishment of the grand entrance hall . . . an assemblage of carved wooden poles that rises fifteen meters toward the ceiling” (Rosi 1991: 301–2). Cut from the forests of the northern coast, these great logs of kwila wood were transported to the National Arts School and worked on collectively by the carvers of the production team to create a syncretic work of artistic traditions from all over the nation. This sculpture was entitled *Bung Wantaim*, a term made popular by politicians during the national election campaigns, signifying a “true coming together.” The meaning of this work lies not only in the visual impact of harmoniously integrating a mixture of styles but also in the importance of the creative process whereby artists from diverse areas put aside their political differences to work cooperatively on a shared venture. Standing in the entrance hall to the chamber, the carved poles are a visual model for the necessary operation of the democratic parliamentary system, reminding politicians and other Papua New Guineans of the need for collaboration and mutual respect in the nation’s highly pluralistic society (Rosi 1991: 302).

As might be imagined, a project this ambitious has not gone without criticism. Despite its attempt to allude to PNG’s diversity, the project had been described as overly “Sepik centered,” and derided for both the reliance on expatriate firms during construction and for the resources wasted in the construction of a monument that would only be enjoyed on a regular basis by the country’s elites. Given this criticism, one might foresee that these aspects of the edifice would be inviting targets for a symbolic attack.

In December of 2013, this predication would have seemed to come true. A chainsaw was used to take down both the carved poles in the interior as well as the series of decorative mask-like woodcarvings; more would have been removed but for the fact that their destruction would endanger the structural integrity of the building. Many protested its destruction, which was framed as pure vandalism. The person who ordered this destruction defended himself by claiming that the carvings were evil and that their removal was necessary to rid the parliament of baleful “spiritual influence.” The person who ordered the chainsaw attack was not someone challenging the privileged place given to the Sepik people or protesting the gulf between the elites and the masses indexed by the existence of such a lavish building in this still impoverished nation-state. Rather, it was Theo Zurenoc, the Speaker of Parliament for Papua New Guinea; his intention was to destroy the art so that he could “replace the pole with a ‘Pillar of Unity,’ which will contain a Bible, a copy of the constitution and feature an everlasting flame and an inscription stating ‘The Word of God.’”¹

Just as many publicly decried this unilateral act, carried out without consultation of the full parliament, others—including evangelical leaders—celebrated it. Some

1. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/papuanewguinea/10534323/Evangelical-Christian-speaker-of-Papua-New-Guineas-parliament-destroys-evil-pagan-carvings.html>, <http://www.pngfacts.com/44/post/2013/12/zurenoucsays-he-is-within-rights-to-renovate-parliament.html>, retrieved January 29, 2014.



Christian supporters saw the masks as running counter to Papuan New Guinea's self-proclaimed status as a "Christian Nation." As one said to Radio New Zealand:

So I see a great contradiction, going into a place which is pretty much crammed with all kinds of idols and carvings and what have you. Because Papua New Guinea being a complex kind of country, people believe in all these kinds of things and for that to be hanging around there in the law-making house, it's a clear contradiction. The Bible's very explicit about that. It calls them idols and they need to be burned.²

Reverend Walters, an evangelical member of the clergy, also defended Zurenoc, this time pointing not to a problem of religious diversity but of unsettling inheritances that need to be avoided.

Papua New Guinea has basically originated from an animistic society . . . and those things that we used to pay homage and respect to were unmythically, paganistically-based [*sic*]," Reverend Walters told Pacific Beat.

If you take a closer look at this big totem pole inside and the faces that have been carved, you will be surprised to find that they don't really resemble any Papua New Guinean face," he said.

They're faces are of Egyptian gods, they're faces of Mongoloids, the face of the Buddha, or Maori-like kind of appearances.³

Later in the article, Reverend Walters mentions that for years, there have been people militating for the removal of these objects. "A lot of people, including parliamentarians have asked for the removal of these things, because it does not truly represent Papua New Guinea," he said. "They're just from one or two provinces that as you know that are steeped in . . . things of the dark ages, or dark people."⁴ Given these statements, it seems unlikely Zurenoc and his supporters have any regrets, or are likely to issue any apologies.

In these quotations we have the question of continuity and discontinuity in Papuan religious practice, and of the Melanesian nature of this new religious practice, clearly articulated; this is a distillation of at least one leg of the Mosko-Robbins debate, fleshed out and brought to life outside of the academic arena. But it is brought in a fashion where the divisions are at times turned on themselves. Papua is presented as a society with an animist history, but the choice of tense suggests that this has been overcome. This overcoming of a primary animism, though, comes hand in hand with a realization that the "roots" of Papuan society were never Papuan to begin with—the figures that Papuans use to "pay homage and respect" to were never indigenous. Rather, they were impositions from abroad, the proximate origin of which was traceable by a set of racialized phylogenetic markers that point

2. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/230595/png-man-supports-parliament-speaker's-removal-of-carved-heads>, retrieved January 28, 2014.

3. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-12-17/an-png-parliament-speaker-saga/5160410>, retrieved January 28, 2014.

4. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-12-17/an-png-parliament-speaker-saga/5160410>, retrieved January 28, 2014.

to these gods as an exterior import, perhaps even an exterior imposition. (This need for an exterior origin for the masks might be made more immediate after the admission by Community Development Minister Loujaya Kouza, who had assisted Zurenoc in ordering the act, that she had been advised to take this act by an “an Israel-based Messianic group”; Zurenoc himself denies that this group has had any influence on his decision.)⁵ At the same time, the concession that there is a continuity of worship in “one or two provinces” of “dark people” undoes this logic of paganism as both something vanquished by Christianity, and as a mode of religiosity that is not properly Papuan.

It does not take a heroic amount of hermeneutic labor to be able to turn Reverend Walter’s statements into an instance of Freudian displacement, where anxieties about an imported Jesus, phylogenetically marked as white, are laundered. But there are further ironies in this situation. The Director of the National Museum and Art Gallery, Dr. Andrew Moutu, ascribes a sort of fetishism (Keane 2007) to Zurenoc:

The first problem is that he inputs a lot of causality, he attributes a lot of causality to the power of Satan and his frontiers of spirits to influence the behaviour and basically they’re attributing all these things to the fact that the economic decline, social discord and monies and so on are all an outcome of his spiritual cause and therefore they’re trying to do this in order to try and purge the nation, as it were.⁶

Here, it is the Christians who are presented as imagining themselves susceptible to occult forces, permeable personages vulnerable in a way that cannot but help summon up the idea of partible subjects; it is instead Dr. Moutu, who speaks for the masks and for the valuing of a Melanesian cultural tradition, who uses the Protestant language of self-possessed individuals who cannot project causal forces to nonhuman actors but must bear moral responsibility on their own.⁷ Dr. Moutu’s response could be seen as that of a melancholic modern, fighting for the remembrance of a way of life seen as already superseded, but even if it is granted that this is the preferred reading in this particular case, a religious strain, whether nationalistic or a back-projection onto pre-Christian relations with supernatural alters, can still be sensed in his position when he refers to Zurenoc’s acts as a “heinous sacrilege.”⁸

5. <http://www.islandsbusiness.com/news/papua-new-guinea/3990/arrest-speaker-png-trade-union/>, retrieved January 29, 2014; for a very insightful discussion of the way in which the “State of Israel” served as an index for the “God of Israel” in debates, see Handman (2015b).

6. <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/pacific-beat/png-speaker-removes-images-from-parliament-as-ungodly/1231094> retrieved January 29, 2014.

7. Dr. Moutu is a former PhD student of Marilyn Strathern. For his PhD research he carried out fieldwork in Kanganamun village on the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea, during which time he was also inducted into the men’s initiation cult there. We would like to thank Camille Roussel for bringing this to our attention.

8. http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2013/12/removal-of-parliaments-heritage-carvings-is-heinous-sacrilege.html retrieved January 29, 2014.

But even this division, between a Christianity that would have the masks destroyed and a self-possessed Melanesian position that sees the masks as part of a national patrimony, is again too procrustean. There are in fact multiple positions that are all coded as being “Christian”; however, this shared self-designation does not create any kind of commensurability, either at the level of concept or of politics, between those who side with the masks and those who side with Zurenoc. Organizations on record as regretting Zurenoc’s actions include the Catholic Bishops conference of Papua New Guinea and the PNG Council of Churches; these groups maintain that, *pace* Zurenoc, there is no need for a forced choice between a Melanesian cultural sensitivity and a Christian message.⁹ These groups, at least, seem to not be marked by anxieties about demonic influence. To those who back the chainsaw-renovation, though, this lack of concern about influence and contagion makes these supposed Christians that much more dangerous and that much more beyond the pale. Zurenoc is quoted as saying that he does not wish to meet with the PNG Council of Churches to discuss this matter because it is not “necessary.” As one article reports, he feels that some elements in the Council of Churches “had strong beliefs in some cultures that were not appropriate.”¹⁰ Conversely, some Christians warn that Zurenoc’s action is a sign that fundamentalism is “creeping” into Papua New Guinea and is influencing or actually controlling positions of power with the parliament and government.¹¹

Both Zurenoc’s action and the responses it elicited are having effects that exceed the mere profession of a particular position. Eight parliamentarians have called for Zurenoc to be relieved of his position as speaker, and the prime minister attempted (unsuccessfully) to halt the destruction; a former speaker doubted that Zurenoc will retain his position long into the new year (a prognostication that was incorrect). There are juridical problems as well. The legality of the action has been challenged, and a public trade union has called for the speaker’s arrest on charges of destroying public property. The *Post Courier* made this story headline news for two weeks, culminating in an editorial that labeled Zurenoc as a “cultural terrorist,” an act in itself that in turn triggered a call from a “Christian lawyer” who called for the newspaper to be boycotted. Others warn that this situation can lead to what is obliquely called “conflict.”¹²

-
9. <http://cathnews.co.nz/2013/12/13/png-bishops-disappointed-carvings-removed-parliament-buildings/>, retrieved January 29, 2014;
<http://cathnews.co.nz/2013/12/20/png-evangelical-church-leader-supports-removal-carvings-parliament/>, retrieved January 29, 2014.
 10. <http://cathnews.co.nz/2013/12/20/png-evangelical-church-leader-supports-removal-carvings-parliament/>, retrieved January 29, 2014.
 11. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/230573/png-catholic-conference-slams-speaker-over-carvings-removal>, retrieved January 29, 2014.
 12. <http://dev.postcourier.com.pg/Stories/culture-fading-away/#.UujxC3k4lz8>;
http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2013/12/christian-lawyer-calls-for-boycott-of-post-courier-newspaper.html; <http://www.islandsbusiness.com/news/papua-new-guinea/3990/arrest-speaker-png-trade-union/>;
<http://dev.postcourier.com.pg/Stories/parlt-move-fuels-tension/#.Uuj4RHk4lz8>,
retrieved January 29, 2014.

Taking the mask off of the problematic

While this moment in Papuan New Guinea politics and religion may be singular, it is certainly not a novelty. Papua New Guinea is not the first postcolony to struggle with what it means to be a self-declared “Christian Nation,” Zurenoc is not the first Christian to try to escape anxieties of influence by an attempt to make a “complete break with the past,” Reverend Walters is not the first believer to try to disown a pagan past, and Dr. Moutu is not the first person to attempt to make commensurable prior forms of life and the contemporary religious imagination (Barker 2012; Eriksen 2009; Handman 2011; Haynes forthcoming; Daswani 2015; Meyer 1998). We should also not ignore the fact that this event is also a medium to debate other concerns about the Papua New Guinea state, from anxieties about the possibility of secularism, to questions as to whether there could be a way to symbolize the disparate Papuan social and political groups as a united national community, to whether liberalism as a political program is desirable to the majority of people of Papua New Guinea (Schram 2014). Still, that does not mean that there is nothing that can be taken away from this for our purposes. There are two object-lessons that the parliamentary imbroglio holds out for us. One is about the true weight of this special section’s question and one is about its expansiveness.

First, questions of the constitution of the personhood are questions of political theology, in that the autonomy and dependence of subjects, their indivisibility, and permutability, will be played out through relations to authority and forms of vulnerability that will shape the terrain of collective life (see also Handman 2015a). To speak about Christianity in Papua New Guinea, no matter how that Christianity is realized, is now to speak of a pre-Christian past and a national future, to speak of the collective propriety and the collective dangers of various modes of personhood. This underscores the real inseparability of conceptually isolatable components at this particular moment in the political history of PNG.

Second, these theo-political constellations of personhood *are* capable of being the object of contestation. Contestation does not necessarily mean a difference in the formal qualities, of course. One is capable of imagining opposed collectivities who are both organized by the logic of an individualized, ethically responsible self, just as it is easy to hypothesize different networks of individuals, each entangled in their own separate milieus, and whose only common relation with one another is that of enmity. But if either of these hypotheticals were the case, one might imagine that this contestation would be illuminated by a certain amount of mutual understanding and respect derived from the fact that their positions, while substantively opposing each other, also mirror each other in the organizational logic. It is hard to identify glimmers of such respect in the debate over the parliament building.

This sense that there are opposing immanent modes of organizing is heightened when one considers the lack of agreement between those figures who seem themselves as speaking on behalf of Christianity. Is it that the members of the Council of Churches and the Catholic Bishop’s Conference have no fears of spiritual contamination because it is fetishistic, or that they simply feel that other relations either eclipse or preclude possible supernatural “pagan” forces? How does one account for such variation in opinion and in claims of self-identity?

At one level, it is impossible to force anthropology to march at the pace of journalism and close these questions down so soon after they have been broached. At another level, closing them down may not be just methodologically impractical, but a theoretical mistake. The theoretical problems that the anthropologist is faced with in moments such as these are the same problems that the actors themselves are forced to take up, though emphasis, temporality, and urgency may torque this fact to such a degree that this identity is obscured.

The question of course is where this shared problem is situated and how it makes itself felt. In some cases, this makes its appearance as a consciously elaborated crisis, the sort that demands a choice as to what practices will be taken up to manage the risk and to control a potential emergency, an ethical, spiritual, or political calamity that is always threatening to open itself up (Foucault 1990: 11; see also Rabinow 2002). But this is still a snapshot of the problem at an advanced stage of concretization, already having gone through substantial discursive coding. This is a stage of problematization where the gap between the problem and the institutions and practices that are a response to it are not so great that one cannot sense a resemblance between the two.

There is another sense of the problematic, though, which subtends the Foucauldian framing, where the problem is not so much a discursively articulated challenge but rather a point where the relation between elements is not fixed; rather, they are cross-cutting arrays formed by transversing degrees of potential openness and closure, of alienability or integrity, of vulnerability or immunity, of proximity or distance to inhuman forces (who themselves are composed by differently arrayed *potentia*). Each one of these aspects can be articulated at various intensities, and the combinatory manner in which these intensities—and several other intensities as well, specific to the situation—will control the characteristics found in any particular actualization. Here, “it is the problem which orientates, conditions and engenders solutions, but these do not resemble the conditions of the problem” (Deleuze 1994: 212).

A shift to problematization and to the genetic allows at once for different realizations—subjectively different worlds—but without foreclosing either alternative realizations or differential shades in the formation of these subjective worlds, which give rise to contestation and further actualizations of the problematic. This is of use because we are now not forced to think in terms of genus and species, stamping some modes of life as dividual or individual, but allowed to ask what are the processes that allow a range of variations in modes of relation and personhood that would encompass both of these hypostases. And there is every reason to suspect that the various realizations may tend to the transitory, the unstable, or the frustrating—there is no promise that problematization is not insolvable, or that there should be any particular actualization that is bearable for the subject.

And here we come to the point. As our history of the anthropological career of these categories indicated, the question of either dividualism or an individualism (be it ethical or “possessive”) is not a question that is particular to the anthropology of Christianity alone; indeed these same debates were visited without a Christian supplement decades ago. And like this moment, we were faced with two options, either a choice between an unbearable binary, or a milk-and-water claim that all humans are admixtures of both, without thinking what the underlying tensions

might be that gives rise to such a variegated mode of subjectivity. This does not have to be—and is probably not—a simple, two-axis combinatory affair.

If the idea of in/dividuality is not a simple two-axis affair, then how do we make sense of the divisions and the binary oppositions that continue to plague definitions of personhood and the underlying theories that serve to connect individuals to “society,” Christian or otherwise (Bamford and Leach 2009)? The many attempts to resolve the problem of whether a person is an individual or dividual do not allow for other questions to be asked and limit the scope and scale of the discussion. In his recent introduction to a special issue on Christian personhood in the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Simon Coleman (2011) pointed out that while some anthropologists (e.g., LiPuma 1998) may argue that we should see all cultures as containing both individual and dividual modalities of personhood, individuality and dividuality need to be understood along different levels or scales of analysis and should be compared with cultural practice (see also Boddy 1998). Methodologically speaking, he claims, the levels and styles of dividuality/individuality may “vary in the same religious tradition, in response to other political, social, and cultural demands” (Coleman 2011: 246; see similarly Bialecki 2015). This is not so different from our observations of multiplicity in the PNG controversy over the public display and the subsequent destruction of the wooden masks and the totemic poles that were erected in their parliamentary building. This event and the debates that ensued foregrounded several different (op)positions around how a Christian—individual and/or dividual—identity might or could be expressed appropriately. They raised several questions: Were Papuans still connected to their ancestral and indigenous past?; were they Christians who comfortably moved between their traditional past and their status as heaven’s anointed?; or were they modernists who believed that these objects held no power in themselves and were only representative of (in)sincere but invalid objections?

An important observation is that these different groups and voices in PNG were using the traditional masks to speak about other masks of collective representation that they felt they metaphorically wore. Masks both actual and metaphorical, whether pointing to dividual multiplicity or individual singularity, can be thought of as the concretized, extensive expression of the underlying intensive problematics and ethical problematizations. In Marcel Mauss’ 1938 lecture “A category of the human mind: The notion of person; the notion of self” (1985), he argued that Christianity was central to the development of the idea of the individual and to the movement away from the primary importance given to the “role” (*personnage*) or ritual mask assumed in the unfolding of sacred dramas. Mauss (1985: 20) famously wrote: “it is from the notion of the ‘one’ that the notion of person was created . . . indivisible and individual.” The moral person, once represented by the character or the mask, had become “synonymous with the true nature of the individual” (17) and eventually with the “category of ‘self’” (*moi*) (20). Even as Mauss proposed a historical emergence of the Christian individual (see also Dumont 1985), his analysis of masks continues to be relevant to an understanding of the person, in that masks represented the *personne morale*, the role and the office they held in life, allowing them to become certain types of moral persons. Since Mauss, others have argued that rather than seeing the actor as simply the recipient of personhood, we should start with the masks available to them in a society and look into



how they are taken up by and allocated to different individuals and groups (see Fortes 1987: 251).

In his book *Religion, morality and the person* Meyer Fortes (1987: 252–3) used a quote, from Marcel Proust, to argue that the Maussian “moral person” is intrinsic to understanding human society as a whole. “The kitchen-maid was a moral person, a permanent institution to which invariable attributes assured a sort of continuity and identity, through the succession of passing shapes in which it incarnated itself; for we never had the same two years in a row” (Proust 1945: 97, our translation). His point was that the institutional role or office that the person holds is important in creating stability and continuity over time and is distinct from the person who holds it. He was interested in the question of how the individual knows herself to be the person she is made to be (Fortes 1987: 279). In other words, how does one demonstrate a sincerity of personhood that is publicly knowable over time, and that the mask is not merely a personal propensity for role-playing? The different positions taken during the PNG debate over the appropriate (spiritual) character of the wooden masks and the totemic pillars revealed a variety of *personage morale* that each held in reclaiming a morally appropriate personhood, in opposition to an inappropriate past that continued to haunt the present. Our own anthropological past is not without its own controversies, ghosts, and ideological struggles over how to best represent Western and non-Western indigenous persons. If the ideas surrounding the “mask” (*persona*) represent different ideological characters and positions about personhood, they can also become the battleground for controversial claims over who is right (or has rights) and when. The Mosko-Robbins debate is one case in point. But, as we have suggested, the story goes further back, in ways that suggest again that anthropologists are more like their Papuan neighbors and interlocutors than they sometimes care to admit.

This set of articles attempt at once to harmonize these oppositions, but only in order to mark other forms of schism and differentiation that this binary occludes: to countereffectuate the extensive forms to work back to the underlying virtual problematic, which is itself constituted of heterogeneous independent variables. Our goal is not so much to take off the mask, or group masks into categories, but ask how it is that these masks are continually fabricated in the first instance. How are these problems structured, and what role do they play in the different Christian societies anthropologists study? In short, what space is there for variance, resonances, or play in these counterpoised terms, something that would go beyond a sterile opposition? Our essays collectively ask whether it is possible to break down the in/dividualist distinction and think it anew, and thereby apprehend the forms in which new modes of interrelatedness might appear to us. These articles, while situated in different ethnographic sites of operation and entanglement (including Europe, Melanesia, and South East Asia) challenge and engage with Western and Christian cosmological assumptions as well as local systems of knowledge concerning personhood.

They are linked to a commonly asked question, regarding “*Who is a Christian?*” (Garriott and O’Neill 2008). How do we know what Christian personhood *is* at any moment in time if not for how it is revealed through the different contexts of articulation and political claims of difference? Yet they also engage with another question that is less frequently asked, but equally important, which is “*When is*

a Christian” (Bialecki 2012)? For example, *when* does individuality or dividuality become an “actable-on-capacity” (Humphrey 2008: 363)? If processes of individual self-fashioning can only partly be realized in rituals or formal acts of public recognition, then we have to acknowledge that Christians ask questions regarding how much they are part of others and how much of themselves is determined by the acts of others (Daswani 2011, 2015). These questions around the processes of self-formation arise at different times and moments in their lives. And what would happen in moments when two or more contradictory roles are held simultaneously in a single institution or in an individual subject? Even if an “either/or” logic (either Christian or non-Christian) is generally applied in Christianity—and within other exclusivist religions—this does not exclude a “both/and” logic that simultaneously permeates its sociality and that is often realized through the ethical decisions with which people struggle with over time. For example it is more often observed that alongside notions of relationalism and dividualism, ideas of individualism become more important when Christians are considering the end-times or when imagining a life in heaven (Robbins 2002; 2004; Vilaça 2011).

As a concept-metaphor “Personhood” lies in the same ontological regime as Kinship, Magic, and Gift Exchange, wherein ideas such as individuality and dividuality theoretically overlap with other anthropological dualities, such as nature and culture, object and subject, science and magic, commodity and gift (Viveiros de Castro 2009). The essays included here propose a dialogue between these different themes and their interrelated terms. Is there an unresolved tension between the individual or dividual focus in any definition of personhood and the ways in which Christian lives are lived? In helping provide an answer to this question Simon Coleman (this issue) is also drawn back to Marcel Mauss’ idea of the “mask,” which, according to him, serves as a useful mediating trope between individuality and dividuality. Replacing Mauss’ diachronic reading of personhood with an analysis of the tensions and negotiations of multiple forms of personhood, as they coexist within the Word of Life Church in Sweden, Coleman provides a synchronic reading of Mauss in order to elucidate the transactional and performative aspects of relationships between self and other and self and self. In the Prosperity practices he writes about, a “remaking” of the self is accompanied by the “remasking” of the self in a transactional orientation, which considers the tensions and the combined functions of amplification (reaching out beyond the self) and incorporation (taking aspects of others into oneself).

Asking a similarly important question regarding how actors account for the tensions within different frames of reference and actions accorded to individuality and dividuality, Ryan Schram (this issue) demonstrates how two seemingly incompatible cases of mourning are brought into manifest expression in Auhelawa, Papua New Guinea. Schram describes how, during funerals rites in Auhelawa society, two types of feasts are often spoken about—a traditional set of exchanges located within a set of kinship relations that emphasizes difference (*bwabwale*) and a Christian one that advocates that no exchange of gifts takes place and that emphasizes similarity (*masele*). Schram explains that rather than being opposite frames of reference such models of mourning are actually in dialogue with one another and used in complementary and pragmatic ways, where, in practice, people either ambiguously shift between one and the other or mix them together, thereby positing different kinds of persons.

Like Schram's piece, Liana Chua's account (this issue) of personhood among the Christian Bidayuh of Malaysian Borneo also turns to funerary rites to better grasp in/dividualization as a process. Here though, rather than identifying two discrete (though dialogically and pragmatically complementary) forms of funeral feast, for the Bidayuh funerals and their associated wakes work at once to create both dividual and individual relations. Through fostering distinctly different sets of "horizontal" relations with consociates and "vertical" relations with God, these wakes insure that the dead are individuated, while the living are further imbricated in social ties that encourage a rich sense of interbeing. These mortuary practices may be exemplary in the production of these ties for the Bidayuh, but they do not exhaust them. As Chua shows in this article, dividualizing and individualizing forces not only coexist throughout the Bidayuh but this economy of forces forms the ethical taken-for-granted; she notes that the small Evangelical Protestant SIB community, which is more (though still not completely) individuated, comes across to the majority of Catholic and Anglican Bidayuh as unworldly, not balancing horizontal relations with the necessary vertical relations that would allow the SIB to be more thoroughly embedded in the community.

By way of contrast with the rest of the contributors, Mark Mosko retains his position that Christianity—both in Melanesia and the West—is properly framed as dividual; but even here, we have an account that sees dividualism and individualism as having, at least in some dispensations, an intimate relationship. Rereading foundational authors such as Burridge, Weber, and Dumont in light of his previous "Partible Penitents" argument, Mosko claims that the forms of both early and Reformation-era Christian personhood and exchange are not reducible to the sort of possessive individualism found in Macpherson's account of late-modern possessive individualism. Rather, claims regarding the individual in Burridge, Weber, and Dumont were attempts to articulate a set of internal and external relations that had not yet had a proper term; the use of individualism by these authors, Mosko suggests, should be read as an effect of their not have the concept of dividual as an extant analytic category at the time that their works were penned. However, Mosko argues, now that dividualism has been added to our intellectual repertoire, a close reading of the divine economies of grace, charisms, and spirit described in their works bear a greater resemblance not to the possessive individualism of autonomous agents, exercising power over external and indifferent objects, but rather to the sort of economies of personhood found in dividualist milieus. This similarity between Western Christian dividualisms and other dividualisms, however, should not be taken for an identity. The key to the Western Christian dividualism as understood by Mosko is the presence of a split subject, sundered not by a Freudian process of repression but by the classical Durkheimian opposition between the sacred and the profane. As Christian subjects approach the holiness and salvation, engaging in various purifying spiritual practices and circulations of grace to produce sacred selves, their sacred and profane aspects undergo "separation, transition, and reaggregation" (this issue). Mosko claims these processes produce actors who may appear to be individuals, and who may even understand themselves to be individuals as well. However, these individuals exist only as an emergent effect of underlying and constitutive dividual operations and can in no way be mistaken for the individualisms associated with late capitalism.

Taken together as a whole then, this set of articles collectively look at the various ways in which the scopes, scales, and scapes of Christian personhood converge, the modalities of how in/dividualizing forces interact with one another. They take up the ways in which (1) *scopes* (the spatial-temporal and institutional vectors that define Christian personhood and its variant social imaginaries); (2) *scales* (the multiple levels of entry, exclusion, and interaction involved in the social forms); and (3) *scapes* (the various links between culture and personhood) intersect, and thereby allow for very different ways of imagining Christian in/dividuality. Multiplying layers and temporalities, intensities, and speeds, these articles locate themselves in the no-man's-land between world religion and autochthonous logics, between porous and impermeable selves, between a social that is marked and one that erases itself; in sum, between dividualism(s) and individualism(s), Christian and otherwise.

References

- Bamford, Sandra, and James Leach. 2009. "Introduction: Pedigrees of knowledge." In *Kinship and beyond: The genealogical model reconsidered*, edited by Sandra Bamford and James Leach, 1–23. New York: Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Barker, John. 2012. "Secondary conversion and the anthropology of Christianity in Melanesia." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 157:67–87.
- Bastide, Roger. 1973. "Le principe d'individuation (contribution à une philosophie africaine)." In *La notion de personne en Afrique Noire, Colloque International du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, 33–43. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 544.
- Bialecki, Jon. 2011. "No caller i.d. for the soul—Demonization, charisms, and the unstable subject of Protestant language ideology." *Anthropological Quarterly* 84 (3): 679–703.
- . 2012. "Virtual Christianity in an age of nominalist anthropology." *Anthropological Theory* 12 (3): 295–319.
- . 2015. "The judgment of God and the non-elephantine zoo: Christian dividualism, individualism, and ethical freedom after the Mosko-Robbins debate." *Milestones: An AnthroCyBib Occasional Paper Series*.
<http://www.blogs.hss.ed.ac.uk/anthrocybib/2015/03/17/occasional-paper-bialecki-the-judgment-of-god-and-the-non-elephantine-zoo/>.
- Boddy, Janice. 1998. "Afterword: Embodying ethnography." In *Bodies and persons: Comparative perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*, edited by Michael Lambek and Andrew Strathern, 252–73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cannell, Fanella. 2006. "Introduction: The anthropology of Christianity." In *The anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Fanella Cannell, 1–50. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chua, Liana. 2012. *The Christianity of culture: Conversion, ethnic citizenship, and the matter of religion in Malaysian Borne*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coleman, Simon. 2004. "The charismatic gift." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10 (2): 421–42.



- . 2006. "Materializing the Self: Words and gifts in the construction of Charismatic Protestant Identity." In *The anthropology of Christianity*, edited by Fanella Cannell, 163–84. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2011. "Introduction: Negotiating personhood in African Christianities." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41 (3): 243–55.
- Course, Magnus. 2011. *Becoming Mapuche: Person and ritual in indigenous Chile*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Daswani, Girish. 2011. "(In-)Dividual Pentecostals in Ghana." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41 (3): 256–79.
- . 2015. *Looking back, moving forward: Transformation and ethical practice in the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 1994. *Difference and repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dumont, Louis. 1985. "A modified view of our origins: The Christian beginnings of modern individualism." In *The Category of the person: Anthropology, philosophy, history*, edited by Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, 93–122. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eriksen, Annelin. 2009. "Healing the nation: In search of unity through the Holy Spirit in Vanuatu." *Social Analysis* 53 (1): 67–81.
- Errington, Frederick, and Deborah Gewertz. 2010. "Expanding definitions, contracting contexts: A comment on Mosko's 'Partible penitents.'" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (2): 250–52.
- Fortes, Meyer. 1987. *Religion, morality and the person: Essays on Tallensi religion*. Edited and with an Introduction by Jack Goody. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The uses of pleasure: History of sexuality, Volume 2*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books.
- Garriott, William, and Kevin L. O'Neill. 2008. "Who Is a Christian? Toward a dialogic approach in the anthropology of Christianity." *Anthropological Theory* 8 (4): 381–98.
- Hamberger, Klaus. 2013. "The Order of Intersubjectivity: Comment on Marshall Sahlins' *What kinship is—and what is not*." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (2): 305–7.
- Handman, Courtney. 2011. "Israelite genealogies and Christian commitment: The limits of language ideologies in Guhu-Samane Christianity." *Anthropological Theory* 84 (3): 655–77.
- . 2015a. *Critical Christianity: translation and denominational conflict in Papua New Guinea*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2015b. "The irreducible materiality of 'unity': Christian-Israelite critiques in Papua New Guinea politics." Paper presented at the Society for the Anthropology of Religion Biannual Conference, San Diego, CA, April 19.
- Haynes, Naomi. Forthcoming. "'Zambia shall be saved!': Prosperity gospel politics in a self-proclaimed Christian nation. *Novo Religio*.

- Humphrey, Caroline. 2008. "Reassembling individual subjects: Events and decisions in troubled times." *Anthropological Theory* 8 (4): 357–80.
- Keane, Webb. 2007. *Christian moderns: Freedom and fetish in the mission encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- LiPuma, Edward. 1998. "Modernity and forms of personhood in Melanesia." In *Bodies and persons: Comparative perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*, edited by Michael Lambek and Andrew Strathern, 53–79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Macpherson, Crawford. 1962. *The political theory of possessive individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Marriott, McKim. 1976. "Hindu transactions: Diversity without dualism." In *Transaction and meaning: Directions in the anthropology of exchange and symbolic behavior*, edited by Bruce Kapferer, 109–42. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1985. "A category of the human mind: The notion of self. Translated by W. D. Halls." In *The Category of the person: Anthropology, philosophy, history*, edited by Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, 1–25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, Birgit. 1998. "Make a complete break with the past: Memory and postcolonial modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist discourse." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28 (3): 316–49.
- Mosko, Mark. 2010. "Partible penitents: Dividual personhood and Christian practice in Melanesia and the West." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (2): 215–40.
- Proust, Marcel. 1945. *Du côté de chez Swann*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Rabinow, Paul. 2002. "Midst anthropology's problems." *Cultural Anthropology* 17 (2): 135–49.
- Robbins, Joel. 2002. "My wife can't break off part of her belief and give it to me: Apocalyptic interrogations of Christian individualism among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea." *Paideuma* 48: 189–206.
- . 2004. *Becoming sinners: Christianity and moral torment in a Papua New Guinea society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2007. "Continuity thinking and the problem of Christian culture: Belief, time and the anthropology of Christianity." *Current Anthropology* 48 (1): 5–17.
- . 2010. "Melanesia, Christianity, and cultural change: A comment on Mosko's 'partible penitents.'" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (2): 241–43.
- Rosi, Pamela. 1991. "Papua New Guinea's new Parliament House: A contested national symbol." *The Contemporary Pacific* 3 (2): 289–323.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 2011. "What kinship is (part two)." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17 (2): 227–42.
- Schram, Ryan. 2014. "A new government breaks with the past in The Papua New Guinea Parliament's 'Haus Tambaran.'" *Material world: A global hub for thinking about things*. <http://www.materialworldblog.com/2014/02/a-new-government-breaks-with-the-past-in-the-papua-new-guinea-parliaments-haus-tambaran/>.

- Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The gender of the gift: Problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2009. "Using bodies to communicate." In *Social Bodies*, edited by Helen Lambert and Maryon McDonald, 148–70. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Vilaça, Aparecida. 2011. "Dividuality in Amazonia: God, the devil and the constitution of personhood in Wari' Christianity." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (n.s.) 17: 243–62.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2009. "The gift and the given: Three nano-essays on kinship and magic." In *Kinship and beyond*, edited by Sandra Bamford and James Leach, 237–68. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Wagner, Roy. 1991. "The fractal person." In *Big men and great men: The personifications of power*, edited by Maurice Godelier and Marilyn Strathern, 159–73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Werbner, Richard. 2011. *Holy hustler, schism, and prophecy: Apostolic reformation in Botswana*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Williams, Raymond. (1961) 2011. *The long revolution*. London: Parthian Books.

Qu'est-ce qu'un individu? Le point de vue du christianisme

Résumé : L'introduction de ce dossier de *HAU* porte sur les conceptualisations de la personne ayant recours aux notions d'individualisme et de dividualisme. Si cet essai approche cette thématique majeure de l'anthropologie à travers le christianisme, plus largement son but est de rouvrir le débat portant sur le concept d'in/dividualisme afin de voir s'il est possible d'imaginer des relations différentes entre ces deux manières d'être. Cette introduction se propose de contribuer au débat en présentant l'histoire des concepts d'individualisme et de dividualisme, en examinant la controverse récente sur la notion de personne chrétienne divisible en Mélanésie, et en évoquant des débats sur la relation entre religion, nation et état en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, entamés à la suite de dommages subis par le bâtiment du parlement de Papouasie. Après avoir effectué la synthèse de cet ensemble de matériaux, nous proposons de ré-orienter le débat sur l'in/dividualisme. Plutôt que de concevoir le dividualisme et l'individualisme comme une simple heuristique, ou comme des notions engagées dans un conflit vivace sur l'organisation du sujet, nous suggérons qu'il est plus fructueux de penser l'in/dividualisme comme l'actualisation d'une problématique unitaire et sous-jacente. Il s'agit d'une problématique non seulement pour l'anthropologue, mais également pour ses interlocuteurs; et en tant que problématique apparente en différents lieux, nous devons nous attendre à trouver non seulement une grande diversité de cristallisations dividuelles et individuelles de la personne, mais également à observer des milieux ethnographiques multiples, exprimant les relations complexes et émergentes entre des formes vivaces de dividualismes et d'individualismes.

Jon BIALECKI is a Lecturer in anthropology at the University of Edinburgh. His academic interests include the anthropology of religion, the anthropology of the subject, ontology and temporality, and religious language ideology. He writes on North American neocharismatic Christianity, on global Christianities, on the anthropology of Christianity, on Mormon ideas of technology, and on anthropological theory; he is currently completing a manuscript on the understanding of the miraculous in the Vineyard church-planting movement, focusing on how the miraculous is expressed in ethics, politics, language, and economic practices. His work has been published in several edited volumes and in academic journals such as *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *American Ethnologist*, *Anthropological Theory*, *Current Anthropology*, and the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.

Jon Bialecki
Social Anthropology
School of Social and Political Science
University of Edinburgh
5.02 Chrystal Macmillan Building
15a George Square
Edinburgh
United Kingdom
Jon.Bialecki@ed.ac.uk

Girish DASWANI is an Associate Professor in Anthropology at the University of Toronto with a special interest in Ghana, the anthropology of religion, ethics, diaspora, and transnationalism. He writes on Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana and the role it plays in shaping the collective aspirations and individual lives of church members from The Church of Pentecost (CoP). He is the author of *Looking back, moving forward: Pentecostal transformation and ethical practice in the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost* (2015), which explores ethical practice as it emerges out of the questions that Ghanaian Pentecostals ask themselves, concerning the causes of unhealthy relationships, and the changes brought about by migration. He is also the coeditor of *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism* (2013).

Girish Daswani
Department of Anthropology
University of Toronto
19 Russell Street, Toronto
Ontario, M5S 2S2
Canada
daswani@utsc.utoronto.ca